

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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R 071434Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1757

S E C R E T CAIRO 4595

NODIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS PFOR EG US

SUBJECT: GAMASY ON US ARMS

1. GAMASY TOLD ME YESTERDAY HE HAS FOLLOWED CLOSELY THE CONGRESSIONAL CONSIDERATION OF C-130'S FOR EGYPT. HE ASKED ABOUT CURRENT STATUS OF THE MATTER. I TOLD HIM THAT, AS HE AHD DOUBTLESS NOTED, THE ADMINISTRATION IS MAKING AN ALL-OUT EFFORT TO OBTAIN APPROVAL FOR THE C-130 SALE ON FMS BASIS. I INVITED HIS ATTENTION TO THE SECRETARY'S PERTINENT TESTIMONY A FEW DAYS AGO. HE HAD READ ABOUT IT, BUT ASKED WHAT MORE IS NEEDED? HE PROFESSED TO BE PUZZLED AT HOW COMPLICATED OUR PROCEDURES ARE ON WHAT HE CALLED A A"LITTLE MATTER" OF THIS SORT. I EXPLAINED TO HIM THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE NELSON-BINGHAM AMENDMENT. THE ADMINISTRATION IS REQUIRED TO COMPLY WITH THIS LEGISLATION, BUT IS CONFIDENT IT WILL WIN. IN THIS CONNECTION, I MENTIONED RECENT REPORTS FROM SENATE SOURCES INDICATING THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE SALE WILL BE APPROVED.

2. WHILE APPRECIATIVE OF THE ADMINISTRATIONS' EFFORTS, GAMASY SAID VERY FRANKLY HE DOES NOT WANT US ARMS. ASKED IF HE WERE CONVEYING A NEW OFFICIAL GOE POSITION, GAMASY SAID NO; HE WAS SIMPLY EXPRESSING HIS PERSONAL
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VIEW. AFTER MANY PROMISES FOR PAST TWO YEARS, WE ARE

STILL IN THE PROCESS OF TRYING TO WORK OUT A C-130 SALE. THE C-130'S ARE NOTHING PER SE, AND NO ONE CAN PRETEND TO BELIEVE THAT THEY WILL IN ANY WAY ALTER THE BALANCE OF POWER. YET THE PROPOSED SALE TO EGYPT HAS CAUSED A MAJOR FUROR. MOREOVER, WE HAVE HAD TO ANNOUNCE PUBLICLY THAT SADAT HAS SAID HE WILL NOT ASK FOR ANY MORE ARMS IN 1976. HE ASSUMED THIS WAS THE PRICE THE ADMINISTRATION AND SADAT HAD TO PAY FOR GETTING APPROVAL FOR THE C-130'S. UNFORTUNATELY, WORD OF THIS COMMITMENT HAS SPREAD AMONG EGYPTIAN MILITARY OFFICERS AND IS CAUSING FURTHER DISENCHANTMENT.

3. I SAID I COULD UNDERSTAND THE GENERAL'S CONCERN. I REMINDED HIM, HOWEVER, THAT OUR PREVIOUS RELUCTANCE TO MOVE TOO FAST ON ARMS SALES, INCLUDING THE C-130'S WAS PROMPTED BY OUR RECOGNITION OF THE VERY REAL CONGRESSIONAL PROBLEM WHICH SUCH SALES WOULD INEVITABLY ENCOUNTER. WE WANTED TO PICK THE MOST PROPITIOUS TIME TO RAISE THE ISSUE. I KNEW THAT STATEMENTS TO THAT EFFECT HAVE FREQUENTLY BEEN DISBELIEVED BY OUR EGYPTIAN FRIENDS. WHAT WE ARE NOW ENCOUNTERING IS EXACTLY WHAT WE HAD PREDICTED. AS I WAS SURE HE RECOGNIZED, THE ISSUE IS NOT THE SALE OF THE C-130'S THEMSELVES; IT IS THE PRINCIPLE OF ESTABLISHING EGYPTIAN ELIGIBILITY FOR FMS SALES WHICH IS BEING CONTESTED. OUR HOPE IS THAT, WITH APPROVAL OF THE C-130 SALES, THE PRINCIPLE WILL BE ESTABLISHED. THIS WILL BE AN IMPORTANT NEW DEVELOPMENT IN OUR RELATIONS. WE HAD IN FACT DISCUSSED WITH THE PRESIDENT GOING THE FMS ROUTE OR A SIMPLE COMMERCIAL SALES ROUTE. LATTER WOULD HAVE BEEN EASIER, BUT WOULD NOT HAVE ESTABLISHED THE PRINCIPLE. WITH THE PRESIDENT'S FULL CONCURRENCE, WE HAVE DELIBERATELY GONE THE FMS ROUTE KNOWING THAT IT WOULD SHARPEN THE DEBATE. BUT FROM ALL INDICATIONS, I REITERATED, THE ADMINISTRATION APPEARS TO BE WINNING.

4. GAMASY SAID HE APPRECIATED THE FACT THAT IT IS THE PRINCIPLE THAT IS BEING FOUGHT. HE WAS GLAD TO HEAR THAT THE ADMINISTRATION HOPES TO WIN.

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HOWEVER, EVEN IF IT DOES SO WITH THE C-130'S, THE SAME PROBLEM WILL ARISE NEXT YEAR WITH THE F-5'S OR TOW'S OR WHATEVER IT MAY BE. AFTER ANOTHER LONG AGONIZING BOUT WITH THE CONGRESS, F-5'S MAY EVENTUALLY BE APPROVED. IF SO, HE WAS SURE WE WILL PHASE DELIVERIES OVER A LONG PERIOD OF TIME. BY THE TIME THE LAST AIRCRAFT ARE RECEIVED, THEY WILL BE OF LITTLE USE TO EGYPT. SAUDI MODA PRINCE SULTAN

HAD TOLD HIM HOW USG SPINS OUT ARMS DELIVERIES. IN THE MEANTIME, THE ISRAELIS ARE RAPIDLY ENHANCING THEIR MALITARY CAPABILITY.

5. GAMASY REITERATED HE WAS EXPRESSING HIS PERSONAL VIEW. HE WAS AWARE OF SADAT'S POSITION THAT EGYPT WANTS F-5'S, TOW'S AND OTHER US MILITARY EQUIPMENT. THE PRESIDENT WANTS SUCH EQUIPMENT FOR POLITICAL/ PSYCHOLOGICAL PURPOSES, AND GAMASY AGREED THAT PROVISION OF SUCH ARMS WOULD HAVE A HELPFUL EFFECT ON ARMY MORALE. IT WOULD SHOW THAT THE US MEANS WHAT IT SAYS ABOUT SUPPORTING SADAT. AS MINISTER OF WAR, HOWEVER, GAMASY OPINED THAT ANY SUCH SALES, EVEN IF THEY MATERIALIZE, WILL DO LITTLE TO STRENGTHEN EGYPT'S DEFENSIVE CAPABILITY. HE HAD CONCLUDED THAT HE MUST LOOK TO OTHER SOURCWS FOR THIS PRUPOSE.

6. COMMENT: THE ABOVE CONVERSATION, WHILE VERY FRANK, WAS CORDIAL THROUGHOUT. GAMASY'S OBSERVATIONS WERE MADE WITHOUT ANY SUGGESTION OF RANCOR. EILTS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARMS, CAT-C, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, US CONGRESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS, MILITARY SALES, C-130, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: RowelIE0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976CAIRO04595
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: OA
Errors: N/A
Film Number: P850107-1626
From: CAIRO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760489/aaaacxvo.tel
Line Count: 136
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: RowelIE0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <08 JUN 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <21 OCT 2004 by RowelIE0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GAMASY ON US ARMS
TAGS: PINT, MASS, PFOR, EG, US, (GAMASY)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006